

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

INPRO Corporation

Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Inpro Cuts Lead Time With Lean Front Office

Client Profile:

InPro Corporation, based in Muskego, Wisconsin, employs 250 people and manufactures plastic wall and door protection systems.

Situation:

InPro Corporation (InPro) was experiencing inconsistent order processing times, but wasn't able to identify the cause. Though the company has been progressively introducing lean principles into shop floor operations for several years, more than half of InPro's employees work in the front office. The company decided to make the front office the next target for lean improvements. InPro's vice president of finance attended a lean manufacturing workshop offered by Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership (WMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate. Impressed by the workshop's content, he asked the WMEP manufacturing specialists for on-site help.

Solution:

WMEP gave InPro employees training in value stream mapping (VSM) and value-added flow analysis (VAFA), and then helped them apply what they had learned. When InPro's cross-functional team did its first value stream map—on the flow of an order from the time it placed through shipping and billing—they really began to understand the business.

The team eliminated several non-value-added “wastes,” such as multiple customer contacts. The team also streamlined contract bidding flow, removing sales from the process and assigning responsibility for contract and credit issues to the finance department. By removing extraneous customer contacts and creating a single point of reference, the company dramatically improved its process times and customer satisfaction.

Results:

Streamlined customer processes to improve customer satisfaction.

Removed non-value-added steps from front office processes.

Reduced lead time by 75 percent.

Testimonial:

“At the point where [the Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership and InPro] had the current state map developed, with the visual impact of all the

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steps and the time associated with those steps, everyone on the team sat back and said, 'Wow!' Almost everyone on the team was saying, 'I didn't realize some of these other things were going on.' They knew part of the flow, but not the entire picture from beginning to end."

John Marek, Vice President of Finance